

## Introduction

The Memphis Poll provides a forum for citizen input regarding City of Memphis services and public priorities. The Memphis Poll presents positive findings as well as concerns with City services.

This is the sixteenth annual Memphis Poll and the final report will provide trend information over this time period. The 2009 Poll was administered in October of 2008, and had 915 respondents, representing the diversity and geography of the City. The full 2009 Memphis Poll report, along with the questionnaire, will be available online at [www.memphistn.gov](http://www.memphistn.gov).

## Service Priorities

The 2009 Memphis Poll asked citizens to rank the services that they considered most important. Crime protection was the most important priority with an 84 percent score, followed by fire protection at 79 percent.

The following priorities are listed in the order of their importance. Moderate priority areas were funding public schools, solid waste collection, funding public libraries, disease & disaster planning, communicating with citizens, and repairing streets. Slightly lower priorities were addressing environmental quality, cleaning public areas, providing job training, providing parks & recreation, funding public learning groups (the Zoo, museums, & arts), and reducing blight. Much lower priorities were property tax breaks called PILOTs, and building new streets & roads.

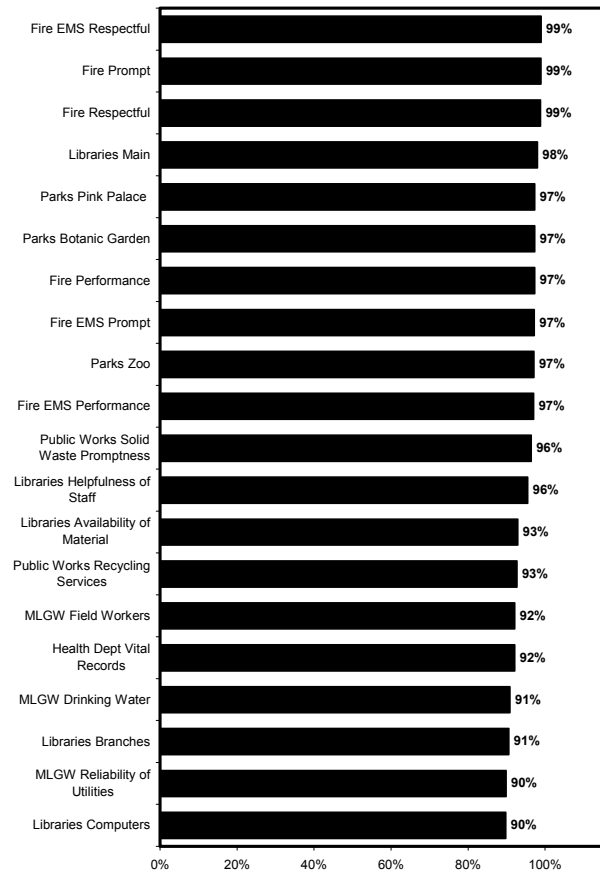
The lowest priorities for Memphis citizens included funding improvements to the Liberty Bowl, Pyramid & Convention Center, and riverfront development—both ranking below 20 percent.

## Highly Rated Services

The Memphis Poll asked citizens to rate essential City services. The most prestigious of these services—those with ratings of 90 percent or higher—are shown in Figure 1. The Division of Fire Services scores averaged 98 percent. The Pink Palace Museum, Botanic Garden, and Zoo—programs under the Division of Park Services—had an average

rating of 97 percent. In addition, this division showed overall improvement in its other services, including neighborhood parks, summer day camps, youth athletics, and community centers.

Figure 1: Services with Scores of 90 Percent or more



The library system had an average score of 93 percent—virtually the same high score as in the 2008 Memphis Poll. Memphis Light, Gas and Water Division averaged 91 percent for the performance of its field workers, quality of drinking water, and reliability of utilities.

The Division of Public Works had several impressive services. Promptness in weekly collection of solid waste was rated at 96 percent and promptness in collection of recyclables was rated at 93 percent. The Health Department scored 92 percent for its vital records program.

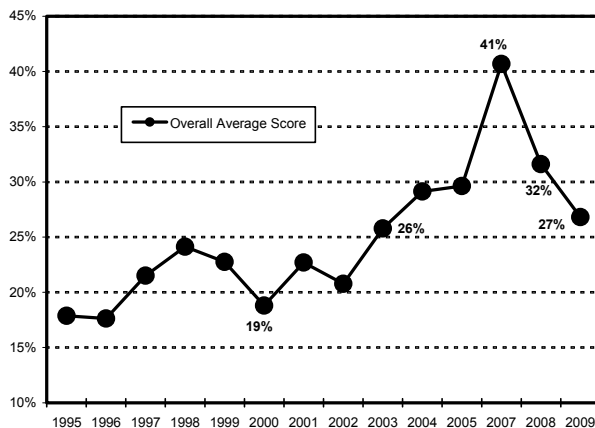
## Police and Crime

The Division of Police Services showed remarkable improvements in the delivery of services for the second consecutive year. For example, the rating for the respectfulness of the officers improved to 89

percent, while police performance for promptness in answering calls improved 15 percentage points over the last five years.

Figure 2 shows a 14 percent-point improvement in concerns about crime when compared to the 2007 Memphis Poll. This year compared to 2008, Midtown which is in the Union Station Precinct, showed the largest improvement at 25 percent, followed by two areas in the Old Allen Station Precinct: Northwest (17 percent) and Northside (15 percent). Since 2007, all sections of the City have had lower concerns about crime.

Figure 2: Citizens' Concerns About Crime



The Memphis Poll also asked citizens about their experience with 911. An impressive 94 percent of the citizens thought the operators were professional, courteous, and attentive. Eighty-four (84) percent thought the call was answered within five rings.

## Physical Conditions

A new agency, the Division of Community Enhancement, was created in 2008 and its responsibilities include addressing problems related to physical conditions in neighborhoods.

The Memphis Poll showed that the division was having an immediate impact. Concerns about litter improved 7 percentage points and vacant lots improved 9 percentage points from the 2008 Memphis Poll. Concerns about rundown houses continued to improve over a two-year period.

Citizens were also more satisfied with streetlights, pollution in rivers & streams, maintenance of alleys, and drainage after rainstorms.

## Neighborhoods

The findings about both crime and physical conditions might have an impact on citizens' perceptions of their neighborhoods. Eighty-four (84) percent of the citizens were optimistic about their neighborhoods. This was very near the high score for the eight years in which this question was asked.

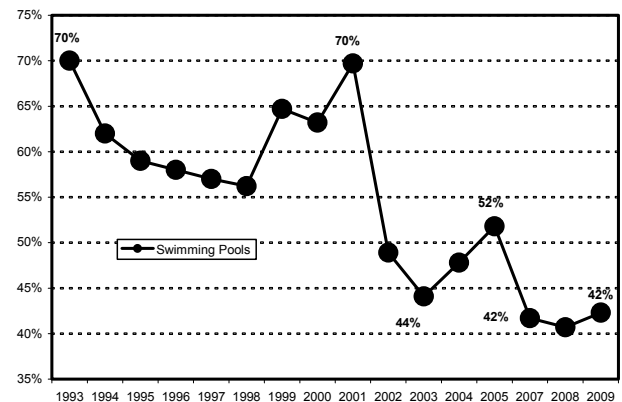
## Service Concerns

Citizens were concerned about several specific services.

Only 36 percent of the citizens thought Memphis Light, Gas and Water Division was doing a good job on the cost of utilities, though this is an improvement over the 2008 Memphis Poll. These concerns were shared by every section of the City, since only one section of the City scored as high as 50 percent on this measure.

Citizens gave low ratings to public swimming pools. Only 42 percent rated the service as good—near the lowest rating for this service in the history of the Memphis Poll. Scores for this service have been very low for the past seven years.

Figure 3: Citizens' Perceptions of Public Swimming Pools



Citizens were asked about their satisfaction when calling City Hall regarding their concerns. They were considerably less pleased with the City's responsiveness—which is a measure of solving the problem in a timely manner.

Citizens that called City Hall were especially concerned about responsiveness to complaints about weeds/litter on vacant lots and rundown houses.